

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the General Assembly Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; Foreign Minister Jean Ping of Gabon, President, 59th session of the U.N. General Assembly; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of Iraq and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City

September 21, 2004

President Bush. A couple of opening statements. We'll answer—I'll answer a couple of questions from the U.S. media, AP and Reuters, and I'll answer a question from the Iraqi media as well.

First, Mr. Prime Minister, it's been my delight to visit with you. I appreciate your courage. I appreciate your leadership. I am—I share the same confidence you share that Iraq will be a free nation, and as a nation, our world will be safer and America will be more secure. We look forward to working with you, sir. I'm proud that you have—you and your administration have stood strong in the face of the terrorists who want to disrupt progress in Iraq.

Today—yesterday an American citizen was beheaded. We express our heartfelt condolences. We send our prayers to the Armstrong family. We also stand in solidarity with the American that is now being held captive, while we send our prayers to his wife.

These killers want to shake our will.

Prime Minister Allawi. Yes.

President Bush. They want to determine the fate of the Iraqi people. We will not allow these thugs and terrorists to decide your fate and to decide our fate. As your election draws closer, I'm confident the terrorists will try to stop the progress by acts of violence. And I appreciate your will, and I appreciate your strength. And we'll stand with you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Welcome.

Prime Minister Allawi. Thank you very much. I would like to pay my condolences

really to the people who lost their lives in defending—fighters of freedom and democracy. The barbaric action of yesterday really is unbelievable. It demonstrates how much these criminals are wanting to damage our worth across Iraq as well as in the civilized world.

We in Iraq appreciate tremendously the courage President Bush took in deciding to wage war to destroy Saddam. The atrocities and tyranny and—atrocities that have been committed when Saddam was around was unbelievable. We show a lot of—hundreds of thousands of mass graves in Iraq.

The war now in Iraq is really not only an Iraqi war. It's a war for the civilized world to fight terrorists and terrorism. And there is no route but the route of winning, and we are going to prevail, and we are going to win, regardless of how much damage they are going to make and cause in Iraq and elsewhere. They want to undermine us in Iraq and to move from Iraq, to undermine the region. And once they do this, they will hit hard at the civilized world, in Washington and New York and London and Paris and Ankara and Geneva, elsewhere—everywhere in the civilized world.

So we are adamant and determined that we, together, will stand and win against the aggressors, and peace and stability will prevail in the Middle East. And we thank you very much for your support.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Criticism of Iraq Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've answered some of Senator Kerry's criticisms in the last couple days about your Iraq policy. A couple of Republicans have raised some questions as well in the last couple days. Senator Hagel said that, "Sharp analysis of our policies is required. We didn't do that in Vietnam, to the point where we finally lost." Senator McCain, you're not being "as straight as we would want him to be," about the situation in Iraq. What do you say to them?

President Bush. Both Senators you quoted strongly want me elected as President. We agree that the world is better off with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

And that stands in stark contrast to the statement my opponent made yesterday when he said that the world was better off with Saddam in power.

I strongly disagree. It is in our interests that we deal with Prime Minister Allawi. It's in our interests that we work toward a free society in Iraq. And I believe we'll have a free society in Iraq, and I know that a free society in Iraq makes America safer and the world better off.

My opponent has taken so many different positions on Iraq that his statements are hardly credible at all.

Who is from the Iraqi media?

Prime Minister Allawi's Visit

Q. Mr. President, how do you evaluate Mr. Allawi's visit to America? And in what way—how can we—what the result will be reflected on the situation of Iraq, as a result of this visit?

President Bush. Well, first, I'm glad to be able to look him in the eye and tell him how much I appreciate his courage. I believe that Iraq needed a strong Government to lead the people toward a free world. And this group of gentlemen here are doing just that.

This is an important visit because the Prime Minister will be able to explain clearly to the American people that not only is progress being made, that we will succeed. The American people have seen horrible scenes on our TV screens. And the Prime Minister will be able to say to them that in spite of the sacrifices being made, in spite of the fact that Iraqis are dying and U.S. troops are dying as well, that there is a will amongst the Iraqi people to succeed. And we stand with them. It's also an important visit for me to say to the people of Iraq that America has given its word to help, and we'll keep our word.

Who is the Reuters man here?

National Intelligence Estimate/Situation in Iraq

Q. Right here, Mr. President, thank you. Why do you think the CIA's assessment of conditions in Iraq are so much at odds with the optimism that you and Prime Minister Allawi are expressing at the moment?

President Bush. The CIA laid out a—several scenarios that said: Life could be lousy; life could be okay; life could be better. And they were just guessing as to what the conditions might be like. The Iraqi citizens are defying the pessimistic predictions. The Iraqi citizens are headed toward free elections. This Government has been in place for a little over 2 months, and the Iraqi citizens are seeing a determined effort by responsible citizens to lead to a more hopeful tomorrow. And I am optimistic we'll succeed.

Listen, I understand how tough it is. The Prime Minister understands how tough it is. He has to live with the few who are trying to stop the aspirations of the many. And we are—we're standing with the Iraqi people because it's in our Nation's interests to do so. We're standing with the people of this good country because we understand that, as Prime Minister has said, that we must defeat them there. Otherwise we'll face them here at home.

And we'll prevail. We will succeed. It's an historic opportunity. And that's why I'm so honored to be with the Prime Minister. It's an historic opportunity not only to change this good country for the better and secure America, but it's an historic opportunity to set example for people in the broader Middle East that free societies can and will exist.

And I want to thank you for your leadership, sir.

Prime Minister Allawi. Thank you, Mr. President. It's very important for the people of the world really to know that we are winning. We are making progress in Iraq. We are defeating terrorists. Najaf, Samarra, Mosul, Basra are all live examples that a lot of progress have been made. Unfortunately, the media have not been covering these significant gains in Iraq. And this is all because of the determination of the Iraqi people. The light that they are seeing at the end will—democracy will prevail, the rule of law will prevail. The issues and culture of human rights will prevail. And the friendship with the United States and with the civilized nations are comfortable there.

So, really, the winning, it's unfortunate, is not being portrayed in the media. This is very unfortunate. I always say that we are welcoming any media who wants to come to Iraq

and see for themselves the grounds we are covering and the winning we are doing in Iraq.

President Bush. One thing is for certain. My discussions with Prime Minister Allawi reconfirm to me that the world is much better off with Prime Minister Allawi and his Government in power. And any statement to the contrary is wrong. The idea somehow that the world would be better off with Saddam Hussein in power is an absurd notion.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:52 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria. In his remarks, he referred to Eugene Armstrong, an American citizen who was killed on September 20 by militants led by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, and Jack Hensley, also an American citizen, who was kidnaped with Mr. Armstrong on September 16. Prime Minister Allawi referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations in New York City
September 21, 2004

Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished members of the United Nations community, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, my country is honored to welcome you to New York. This is my fourth General Assembly, and I'm very pleased to be among you as we open the 59th session of the United Nations General Assembly this year under the leadership of Foreign Minister Ping of Gabon.

We last met in the shadow of a great tragedy. In August 2003, a terrorist attack in Baghdad took the lives of 22 servants of peace, including Sergio de Mello, who gave his life for the values of liberty and peace. We pledge, once again, to carry on their essential work.

That work is moving forward. U.N. officials are helping the people of Afghanistan as that nation moves toward an historic Presidential election this October. In Iraq, you're helping to build the infrastructure of democracy and prepare the way for free and fair nationwide elections. In Sudan and Liberia,

Haiti and other nations, this body has been working hard to bring security, humanitarian assistance, and stability to the people in desperate need. Much credit for these efforts is due to Kofi Annan, who has shown strong vision.

Mr. Secretary-General, with admiration for your leadership and with confidence in this organization, I offer a toast to you and your service and to the United Nations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:41 p.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; and Foreign Minister Jean Ping of Gabon, President, 59th session of the U.N. General Assembly. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-General Annan.

Proclamation 7819—National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, 2004

September 21, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Throughout our history, the members of the National Guard and Reserve have served our country with honor. Our Nation depends on the dedication of these citizen-soldiers, and our Guardsmen and Reservists rely on the support of their civilian employers to allow them to fulfill their service obligations. During National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, we honor the sacrifice of these brave men and women, and we express our gratitude for the commitment of their employers.

As we fight terror and advance freedom, members of the National Guard and Reserve are making vital contributions around the world as fully integrated components of our Nation's Armed Forces. At home, they are called on to protect our communities, preserve order, and provide assistance in times of natural disaster, balancing the demands of their families, civilian careers, and military